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Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Macroeconomic policy questions

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Human rights questions

Letter dated 29 December 1998 from the Permanent Representatives of Belarus and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit herewith the texts of the Joint Declaration by President of the Republic of Belarus A. G. Lukashenko and President of the Russian Federation B. N. Yeltsin, the Declaration on the Further Union of the Russian Federation and Belarus and the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus on the Equal Rights of Citizens, signed by the President of the Republic of Belarus, His Excellency A. G. Lukashenko, and by the President of the Russian Federation, His Excellency B. N. Yeltsin, in Moscow on 25 December 1998 (see annexes).

We should be grateful if this letter and its annexes were circulated as a document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly under the agenda items "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", "Macroeconomic policy questions", "Sustainable development and international economic cooperation", "Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family", and "Human rights questions".

(*Signed*) Aleksandr **Sychou**
Permanent Representative of the Republic
of Belarus to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Yuri **Fedotov**
First Deputy Permanent Representative of the
Russian Federation to the United Nations

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Annex I

Joint Declaration by President of the Republic of Belarus A. G. Lukashenko and President of the Russian Federation B. N. Yeltsin

Belarus and the Russian Federation have taken an historic step on the path towards the unity of the two fraternal countries and peoples: on 25 December 1998 in Moscow, we signed a Declaration on the establishment of the Union State in the coming year, a Treaty and an Agreement on ensuring the equal rights of our States in the territories of Belarus and the Russian Federation.

The establishment of the Union's state and administrative bodies, to which Belarus and the Russian Federation will delegate broad powers in the social and economic area, the foreign policy sphere, and in ensuring defence and security, will combine the efforts of our countries and peoples in order to respond effectively to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Belarus and the Russian Federation remain sovereign and full members of the international community of States, and retain all rights and obligations under the international treaties to which they are Parties.

Moscow, 25 December 1998

Annex II

Declaration on the further union of the Russian Federation and Belarus

The process of the comprehensive integration of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, which was given a powerful impetus as a result of the signing on 2 April 1997 of the Treaty on the Union of Belarus and the Russian Federation, and the steady advancement by the two States along the path towards voluntary unification are based on the solid foundation of a common destiny, the historical roots and traditional friendship of fraternal peoples, the indissolubility of their kindred bonds, spiritual and cultural closeness, a confluence of interests and close cooperation in the political, geostrategic, economic, humanitarian and defence fields, in consistent implementation of the agreed policy to strengthen the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Union of Belarus and the Russian Federation, established in accordance with the will of their peoples, has proven its viability and has demonstrated in practice the advantages of thorough integration.

The citizens of the two States, thanks to the lifting of border and customs barriers, the granting to them of equal rights in the field of education and medical assistance and with regard to employment and remuneration for labour, and the acquisition and use of property, no longer need to feel that they are foreigners in each other's territory.

A significant increase in reciprocal trade has been achieved and a broad range of large-scale joint programmes and projects is being implemented, which is making it possible to maintain and expand industrial and scientific and technological potential, create new jobs and more effectively tackle social questions.

At the same time, an analysis of the development of the integration processes in the Union indicates that the possibilities for combining the economic and spiritual potential of our countries are far from being fully exploited. This was particularly evident in recent months in view of the growing global and regional crises.

The Russian Federation and Belarus have completed the path from the Association to the Union of the two States. Aware of the need to undertake a new stage of integration and enhance the process of achieving unity, the Presidents of the Russian Federation and Belarus declare their determination to continue the gradual movement towards voluntary unification in the Union State while preserving the national sovereignty of the States members of the Union.

To these ends, the Russian Federation and Belarus will take the following joint steps.

In the political sphere, a treaty on the unification of the Russian Federation and Belarus in the Union State will be drawn up and submitted for national discussion by the middle of 1999.

Union State bodies and corresponding national administrative bodies will be established and a single budget will be drawn up.

A mechanism for conducting a common policy in international affairs and questions relating to defence and security will be devised.

In the economic sphere, fundamental changes which are to form a solid basis for closer relations will be carried out. As early as the end of the first half of 1999, a single legal environment for all economic entities will be established; a single customs area will be set up; and civil and tax legislation currency regulation and the monetary and credit system will

be unified. The unification of the energy and transport systems and the establishment of a single scientific, technological and information area will be completed. The transition to a single currency will be carried out.

All the work in this field will be organized on the basis of the Agreement on the Creation of Equal Conditions for the Economic Entities of the Russian Federation and Belarus and the Protocol thereto.

In the social and humanitarian sphere, active steps will be taken to harmonize social standards and guarantees for work, pension security, the provision of entitlements and the application of labour safety standards. The monitoring and protection of human and civil rights and freedoms in accordance with the generally recognized principles and norms of international law, unified approaches to the development of educatic culture and science, and the mutual enrichment of the national cultures while maintaining and developing the ethnic and linguistic identity of the peoples will be ensured. The Treaty on the Equal Rights of Citizens will promote significant progress in achieving these aims.

The Presidents of the Russian Federation and Belarus believe that the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus will enter the twenty-first century in a new capacity — as the Union State. This historic step is in keeping with the vital interests of the two fraternal peoples and will ensure the conditions for achieving stable social and economic development, carrying out urgent reforms in all spheres of social activity, enhancing the living standard and quality of life of citizens, and playing a proper role in the international community of nations.

(*Signed*) B. **Yeltsin**
President of the Russian Federation

(*Signed*) A. **Lukashenko**
President of the Republic of Belarus

Moscow, 25 December 1998

Annex III

Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus on the Equal Rights of Citizens

The Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, hereinafter referred to as the "Contracting Parties",

For the purposes of raising the standard of living of their peoples, establishing conditions conducive to harmonious human development in all its aspects and guaranteeing the equal rights of the citizens of the Union in the territory of both Parties,

Guided by their peoples' desire for unity,

In fulfilment of the aims and tasks entrusted to the Union of Belarus and the Russian Federation by the Charter of the Union of Belarus and the Russian Federation,

Taking as a basis the Treaty on the Union of Belarus and the Russian Federation of 2 April 1997 and expanding on its provisions with a view to achieving closer relations between their peoples and effective integration in the various spheres of national and public life,

Having agreed as follows:

Article 1

Citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus shall enjoy equal rights to vote and be elected in elections to the elected bodies of the Union.

Article 2

Citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus shall have equal rights to participate in economic activity in the territories of the Contracting Parties.

Article 3

Citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus shall enjoy equal civil rights and freedoms, as provided for under the legislation of the Contracting Parties.

Article 4

The Contracting Parties shall ensure that citizens have access to and equal rights to receive secondary, specialized secondary, higher and postgraduate vocational education. Students shall enter educational institutions on the basis of the applicable rules for admission.

Article 5

Exchanges of residences by citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus shall be carried out in accordance with national legislation and shall be a basis for issuing permanent residence permits to them in the territories of the Contracting Parties.

Article 6

The Contracting Parties shall guarantee the equal right of their citizens to acquire, own, use and dispose of property in their territories.

The obtaining by citizens free of charge of State or municipal property or its acquisition in accordance with the privileges applicable in connection with the privatization process shall be regulated by the national legislation on privatization.

The Contracting Parties shall ensure that protection of their citizens' right of ownership is guaranteed.

Article 7

The Contracting Parties shall ensure that citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus have equal rights in respect of job placement, remuneration for labour and the granting of other social and legal guarantees in the territory of the Russian Federation and Belarus.

Citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus shall have equal rights in respect of remuneration for labour, working hours and rest periods, labour protection and working conditions and other questions relating to labour relations. Labour shall be regulated on the basis of an employment agreement (contract) in accordance with labour legislation. The Contracting Parties shall guarantee reciprocal recognition of employees' length of service, including service calculated on a preferential basis, and specialized work experience gained in connection with citizens' employment.

Article 8

Citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus shall be guaranteed equal rights to social security, medical assistance and access to the services of medical and health-care institutions in the territories of the Contracting Parties.

There shall be no reciprocal payment for the provision of first aid and emergency medical assistance or the treatment of socially significant diseases.

Article 9

The Contracting Parties shall enact legislation in the course of 1999 in accordance with this Treaty.

Article 10

The Contracting Parties shall take the measures necessary to give effect to the decisions of the Supreme Council and the Executive Committee of the Union of Belarus and the Russian Federation on guaranteeing the equal rights of citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus.

Article 11

The Contracting Parties shall establish a commission on human rights.

The Commission's mandate, the conditions for its establishment and its working methods shall be determined in a separate agreement between the Contracting Parties.

Article 12

Those provisions of this Treaty that do not conflict with the legislation of the Contracting Parties and their international obligations shall be applied provisionally as from 1 January 1999.

The Treaty is subject to ratification and shall enter into force upon the exchange of the instruments of ratification.

DONE at Moscow on 25 December 1998 in two copies in the Russian language.

For the Russian Federation:

(*Signed*) B. **Yeltsin**

For the Republic of Belarus:

(*Signed*) A. **Lukashenko**